

Taking care of your PPE

Written by Sheq Management

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Using worn or damaged personal protective equipment (PPE) may be a catalyst to harm. WILLIAM GEORGE speaks to suppliers about taking proper care of PPE

In the workplace, the employer is responsible for identifying and assessing potential risks. PPE is only one part of the solution. Christo Nel, director sales and marketing in Africa for Uvex, notes: “Safety managers are responsible for preventing potential risks to employees, and as a ‘last resort’ offer PPE to protect workers from any potential harm.”

PPE is intended to protect a wearer from any potential risks and hazards, however, if it is worn out, it may not provide effective protection.

While Section 14 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act stipulates that the employer must provide the PPE, it remains the responsibility of the user to inspect, care for and correctly use the PPE for its intended purpose.

There are routines and guidelines that should be followed in order to maintain the quality of PPE. It is also advisable to keep PPE in good shape even when it is not in use.



Nel says the best place to start would be the manufacturer’s user instructions, which are included in the packaging of the product.

He explains: “All PPE should be supplied with detailed instructions on how to maintain and care for the product. Some reputable manufacturers will offer training in this regard.

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“A simple rule of thumb is to avoid using solvents or chemicals to clean PPE, and to always refer to the manufacturer’s recommendations when cleaning the product.”

Nel advises: “A visual inspection of all PPE products must be done before the wearer dons the apparel. This is to make sure that there is no damage that may affect the integrity of the product and put the user at risk of injury.

“The manufacturer’s recommendations and/or regulatory requirements on whether a product is ‘disposable’ must be adhered to by the end user. The recommended usage period (or lifespan) of the product must not be exceeded, as this may affect the integrity of the product and put the wearer at risk.”

Nel concludes: “If PPE is well looked after it should provide protection when an incident occurs.”